

Settling the Cape Fear

This section will help you meet the following objective:

8.1.06 Identify reasons for the creation of a distinct North Carolina colony and evaluate the effects on its government and economics.

As you read, look for:

- what led settlers to the Cape Fear area
- North Carolina becoming a royal colony
- vocabulary terms **naval stores**, **bounty**, **royal colony**



Above: Maurice Moore, Jr., was born on the Cape Fear and grew up in the 1730s at Rocky Point, north of Wilmington. His father was one of the leaders of “the Family” who settled the region after the Tuscarora War. The Moores made a fortune producing tar and other products. The son grew up to be one of the first judges of the state.

The defeat of the Tuscarora opened up new lands to white settlement in the years after 1715. Most significantly, the Cape Fear region (which included the lands on both sides of the Cape Fear River from its mouth to fifty miles inland) became the most prosperous area of the colony. Settlers pushed into that area to take advantage of its economic opportunities. Some settlers hoped to make a good living growing rice, as had hundreds in the Charles Town area. More settlers, however, turned to the production of **naval stores**. The longleaf pines of Carolina gave the British much-needed pitch, turpentine, and tar, all vital to seal ships and keep them from leaking on oceangoing voyages. During the early 1700s, the British paid **bounties** for naval stores, which meant they made sure producers got a good price for the products as a way to supply their growing fleet.

The potential profits from naval stores soon drew settlers to the Cape Fear, for millions of acres of land near the river were full of longleaf pine. The first settlers were led by Maurice and James Moore. The Moore family had settled in South Carolina from the sugar island of Barbados. They knew how important rice and tar were in the Caribbean economy. About 1723, they tried to move to the Cape Fear.

The Lords Proprietors considered the Cape Fear to be part of South Carolina. As a result, they had restricted who could live in the area. To deal with this problem, the Moores used their family’s reputation to become friends with George Burrington, the governor of North Carolina. Burrington wanted to open up new areas for settlement to deal with the old problem of too little tax money. So, Burrington granted land to the Moores (once they paid their quit-rents in advance), in spite of the instructions from the Proprietors.



Blank Patents

Like a real estate developer, Governor Burrington left the Albemarle in 1724 and set up an office at the mouth of the Cape Fear. Burrington took some land deed forms (called *blank patents* in that day), sold them to the Moores and others, and let them fill in the blanks as to the location of the land later. The Moores quickly took advantage of the terms. Maurice Moore acquired more than 9,000 acres; his brother Roger took 2,000 more. Other in-laws of the Moores picked up a few thousand more acres.

The Proprietors eventually dismissed Burrington, for “his illegal proceedings.” Some of the Proprietors were afraid that Burrington would join with the Moores and convince the king to take the North Carolina colony away from them. The Moores had already been part of a successful effort to wrest the government of South Carolina away from the Proprietors just after the Tuscarora War. But, as the smarter Proprietors realized, Burrington had already turned the Cape Fear into North Carolina territory; therefore, the Proprietors would more easily receive their quit-rents.

While all these matters were being argued, a select group of South Carolinians moved into the Cape Fear. So many of the settlers were related either to the Moores or their in-laws that they became known as “the Family.” They used the blank patents to gain more than 80,000 acres of land. So encouraged was Maurice Moore that he built a wharf at the mouth of the Cape Fear River and called the tiny cluster of buildings there the Town of Brunswick. Governor Burrington even granted himself 10,000 acres of good forests.

The real estate scandal on the Cape Fear pleased no one but “the Family” that got all the land. South Carolina leaders were angry that land

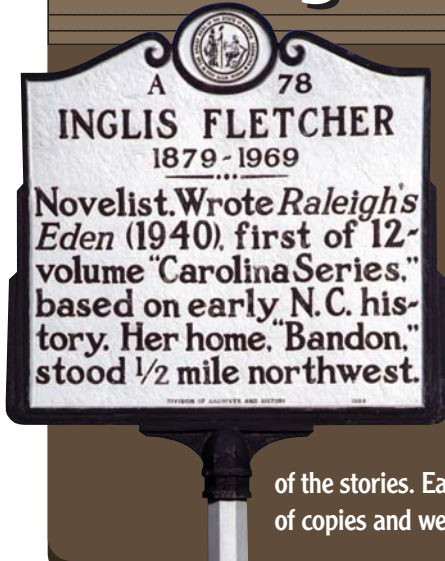
Above: No one lives in the town of Brunswick any more, but it is a state historic site. The foundations of several buildings can be seen, including this house, which used ballast stones taken from ships that docked there in the 1730s.

Did You Know?

By 1725, four-fifths of the tar and pitched used in England came from the American colonies.

HISTORY BY THE HIGHWAY

Inglis Fletcher



The early Albemarle was the setting for a series of novels Inglis Fletcher wrote about the first settlers. She mixed real people with imagined characters to capture the struggle and flavor of life—from the failure at Roanoke to the success of the American Revolution. Actual events like the Lost Colony and Culpeper’s Rebellion were the focus

of the stories. Each had a love story. They sold millions of copies and were translated into seven languages.

they claimed was being given away. Albemarle leaders were angry that the Cape Fear interests were getting lots of land for very little money. British King George I was unhappy that Carolina continued to be such an impossible place to govern and control. As Burrington told officials in London when he returned to England, “These people were always very troublesome.” Finally, the Proprietors were fed up with the unending troubles that their investment brought them. The Proprietors determined to sell out and get what money they could from a bad deal.

The End of the Proprietorship

After some negotiation, the Crown bought back its interest in the lands that had become the colonies of North and South Carolina. Each Proprietor got £2,500 (a considerable fortune in

those days) for the value of the real estate and a share of back quit-rent payments. In 1729, North Carolina went from being a proprietary colony to a **royal colony**. It now belonged directly to the king.

Just as nothing had gone smoothly in the establishment of the Carolina colony, so something jolted the transfer of the province to royal rule. One proprietor, Lord Granville, a grandson of one of the original eight Lords Proprietors, refused to give up his one-eighth ownership of the land. Granville was happy to let the king run the troublesome place, but he still wanted to collect his share of quit-rents. Since English tradition did not allow a king to confiscate (seize) property under such circumstances, the British Crown got the whole colony to rule, but only seven-eighths of the land to tax. The question, which took years to resolve, was which one-eighth did Lord Granville get? Not surprisingly, that dispute led to even more rebellions and fights.

Did You Know?

South Carolina had become a royal colony in 1719.

It's Your Turn

1. How did the early settlers to the Cape Fear earn their living?
2. Why were the South Carolinians angry over the settlement of the Cape Fear?
3. When did North Carolina become a royal colony?

CAROLINA CURIOSITIES

When Did We Become Tar Heels?

History is more than just what happened when. *Why* some event turned out the way it did, rather than the opposite result, keeps historians arguing.

In the case of North Carolina's nickname—the Tar Heel State—we know what it means and why we got it, we just don't know when folks started calling us by it.

The “why” dates back to the early days of the North Carolina colony. When England began to become a world power in the early 1700s, it needed to expand its shipping fleet, both commercially and militarily. To do so meant finding new supplies of tar, which was used to caulk the hulls of ships to ensure they would not spring a leak. Tar comes from boiling down the resin of pine trees, and North Carolina in the early 1700s had an abundance of longleaf pine trees. Coastal residents of the colony responded to the bounty paid for naval stores and quickly began the task of turning out thousands of barrels of tar. The industry continued in the Coastal Plain for more than a hundred years.

Tar was collected from a iron pot at the bottom of a hole in the ground, once the pine trees were burned out. Someone had to go down into the hole to retrieve the pot. Feet quickly got sticky with the tar, hence North Carolinians



Above: Tyler Hansborough of the University of North Carolina Tarheels.

had tar on their heels from an early date.

Yet, we are not sure when other Americans began to kid us about “the pine woods that abound in that tar and turpentine state.” At first, they described us as “tar burners” in the early 1800s.

Another story was first told in 1901 about North Carolinians in the Civil War. During one battle, North Carolina troops stood firm while others took off. After one of the retreating Virginians asked if “there was any more tar down in the Old North State,” he was told Virginia had bought it all “to put it on you’ns’ heels to make you stick better in the next fight.” Another version of the story says that Mississippians once chided retreating North Carolinians for “forgetting to tar your heels this morning.” It seems that “Tar Heel” soon became the nickname of the state’s Confederate troops. One general

in a later battle was said to have congratulated “you Tar Heels” for fighting so hard.

The nickname began to appear in print soon after the Civil War. Although other states continued to laugh about the name, North Carolinians said it with pride. By the twentieth century, the University in Chapel Hill had logically adopted “Tar Heel” as its historically based nickname.